1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

MUSICAL AND SIGNALING INSTRUMENTS

The music is chiefly instrumental; vocal music is seldom heard, and is chiefly performed by the sukya in practicing his incantations.

DRUM.—Our common drum, known by its English name (M.: *drum;* S.: *durum*), is the favorite musical instrument among the men; it has been extremely popular ever since its introduction by British garrisons during the eighteenth century. The Indians make it themselves and beat it at their drinking bouts with the aid of the wooden drumsticks (M.: *mihta;* S.: *tiñni*).

The horizontal hollowed-out log drum with an H-shaped cutting made longitudinally (the *teponatzli* of the Mexicans and the *tunkul* of the Maya), which is used for signaling purposes in different parts of America and Melanesia, appears to have been unknown in the region under consideration. The common drum is sometimes used to advise the neighbors of a miala feast.[81]

The upright native drum (M.: *kuñbi, kuñbaya;* S.: *pañtan, panatañ*) is goblet shaped and hollowed out from a solid block of mahogany or cedar; it has a height of about 3 feet at least, including the pedestal base, which is carved from the same block of wood. The smallest diameter is at the bottom just above the pedestal support. The drumhead at the top is formed by a piece of animal skin (deer, toad, iguana, or tapir); it is held taut by means of a strong rope which is attached to the pendent edges of the skin and firmly tied to the shell of the drum. It is beaten with the hand and used only at the festival of the dead. This instrument corresponds to the *huehuetl* of the ancient Mexicans.

RATTLES.—Round or egg-shaped gourd rattles, the common playthings of our babies, figure among the musical instruments of the Mosquito Coast, and are found in use all over the New World. They are handled chiefly by the women, particularly at the festivals of the dead, in order to mark the measure at the dances. These rattles are made from the fruits of the calabash tree, from which the pulpy contents have been removed through a circular opening at the stem; small stones, pebbles, hard seeds, or beans are then introduced. Finally, a close-fitting stick, which acts like a handle, is introduced; it tapers somewhat toward the distal end, which is thrust entirely

[81] The foreigners living on the Mosquito Coast jokingly use the phrase "bush telegraph" to refer to the rapid way in which news sometimes travels, but there is no such mysterious way used by the Indians. It is claimed that the Miskito living on the savanna near the sea occasionally spread news by the signal of making a savanna fire. But such a signal could not be very definite as these fires are generally kindled for no purpose but to burn the grass and low thicket. Sometimes men from villages far apart come within shouting distance of one another when hunting. It is also claimed that some men have a "whistling language," and are able to communicate any sentence correctly by whistling.